



# Washington State Department of Agriculture

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## **Workshops prep Yakima Valley farmers to explore and expand local market opportunities**

**OLYMPIA** – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) is hosting a three-part workshop series in the Yakima Valley to help small and mid-sized farmers develop the skills to meet growing consumer demand for locally grown produce. All workshops will offer Spanish interpreters.

“The goal is to expose farms at all stages of market-readiness to the opportunities and needs of customers in different markets and allow farmers and buyers to connect,” said Laura Raymond with WSDA’s Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program. “Some farms may be ready now for these new markets, but others may need more time. My hope is that the workshops will plant seeds of ideas for future business planning.”

The first workshop, [Wholesale Success](#), is May 3 at the Yakima County Resource Center in Union Gap, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Farmer and author, [Atina Diffley](#), will share her knowledge on business management, marketing, building sales relationships and meeting customer needs with best practices for postharvest handling and packing. Free registration includes a [Wholesale Success Manual](#), provided through partnership with FamilyFarmed.org and the USDA Risk Management Agency Education Program.

Dates for two additional workshops have not been finalized. The Bridging the GAPs Farm Walk and Workshop will be held in late summer and is meant to help farmers expand their market access by learning on-farm food safety best practices that are scaled to small and mid-sized farms.

At this event farmers will learn to prepare for voluntary Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) audits through practical methods for implementing food safety. Farmers will also learn the latest about the new FDA produce safety rules established under the Food Safety Modernization Act.

The workshop series builds to the final event, a Local Buying Tour and Trade Meeting for local buyers and farm representatives to tour Yakima Valley farms and food businesses together. Planned for the early fall, the tour will demystify buying local with a behind-the-scenes look at the path produce can take from farm to fork. Farmers and buyers will talk directly about their businesses and products while they explore what makes a successful local sourcing relationship.

Register online at [wsda.eventbrite.com](http://wsda.eventbrite.com) or learn more by visiting [WSDA Small Farm Direct Marketing Program](#) and [WSDA Bridging the GAPs Project](#). These events are funded by the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

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